

New Vessel Helps to Better Understand and Protect Humpback Whales



Photo: HIHWNMS, MMHSRP Permit #932-1489

Specially trained responders work to free a whale entangled in ropes.

The Mission

The Hawaiian Islands are important habitat for humpback whales (kōholā) providing critical breeding grounds for the endangered animal. Up to 12,000 of the 20,000 humpback whales found in the North Pacific are found in Hawaiian waters every year from November to April where they breed, give birth and nurse their young.

Every year there are reports of whales that have become entangled in ropes or nets. Research by sanctuary staff estimate that in some regions over 50% of humpback whales have been recently entangled. Sanctuary staff have expertise in disentangling whales and work to understand the cause. The goal is to reduce the threat of entanglements, which is estimated to kill over 300,000 cetaceans worldwide every year.

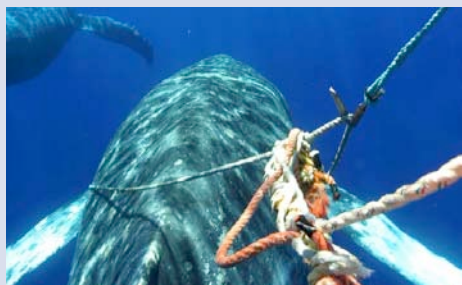


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Underwater photo of a humpback whale being cut free from entangling rope.



Photo: Silver Ships

The new sanctuary vessel is designed specifically for working around 40-ton humpback whales.

A Specialized Vessel

This new 11-meter vessel was specifically built and customized for large whale response, disentanglement and research for the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. Based in the heart of the sanctuary, the vessel's homeport will be primarily in Maui at Mā'alaea Harbor near the sanctuary's Kihei facilities.

- True turn-key response boat ready to respond immediately.
- Built-in storage for 15-foot rapid deployment inflatable.
- Davit for lifting heavy equipment.
- Custom designed upper helm station provides the boat operator with excellent visibility for safe operation around whales.
- Multiple stations for observers.
- Versatile platform for tagging, observation, health assessment and response to marine mammals in distress.
- Support for research and monitoring of fish, corals and maritime heritage resources through dive ops by cooperating partners.

Specifications

<i>Vessel Name:</i>	<i>Koholā</i>
<i>Builder:</i>	Silver Ships Inc.
<i>Delivery:</i>	July 2011
<i>Hull Material:</i>	Aluminum, hybrid air and foam collar
<i>Length:</i>	38' - 1"
<i>Beam:</i>	10' - 4"
<i>Draft:</i>	3.80 ft
<i>Engines:</i>	Envinrude E-Tec
<i>Propulsion:</i>	Twin outboards
<i>Maximum Speed:</i>	25 knots
<i>Range:</i>	200 nautical miles
<i>Accommodations:</i>	1-2 crew, 9-10 passengers

